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#### INDEX:

- (1) Poll: 51% favor constitutional revision
- (2) DPJ's Ozawa's strategy again suffers a setback with failure to decide a joint candidate in talks with SDP for Upper House representation in Oita Prefecture
- (3) Upper House election in 2007: Postwar generation of LDP lawmakers split over whether Abe should take reform line or conservative policy
- (4) Upper House election: Support organizations undergoing change; DPJ seeking support from agricultural cooperatives, religious circles; LDP approaching coops
- (5) Former Prime Minister Koizumi may resume diplomatic activities
- (6) Rumor that Vice Foreign Minister Yachi is most likely candidate to serve as chief of the secretariat of Japanese version of NSC

#### ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll: 51% favor constitutional revision

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Full)  
May 3, 2007

Ahead of May 3 Constitution Day, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun conducted a public opinion survey. In the survey, a total of 51% answered that

the Constitution should be amended, with 35% saying they would like the Constitution to be upheld as is. As seen from these figures, constitutional revision proponents outnumbered opponents. The survey also asked respondents to pick one or more problems about the Constitution. In response to this question, 29% answered that the Constitution stipulates nothing to meet the changing times, allowing for establishing environmental rights, including the right to enjoy a better environment, and privacy rights, such as the right to self-determination on private information. This answer topped all other answers. Among other answers, 22% said Constitution Article 9, which stipulates Japan's war renunciation, is no longer realistic.

In 2000, the Diet set up a research commission on the Constitution in its lower and upper chambers. Since then, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun has asked the same question. However, the proportion of those in favor of revising the Constitution has been on the decline. In the survey this time, their proportion was down 3 percentage points from the last survey conducted two years ago on the Constitution. Meanwhile, the proportion of opponents to constitutional revision was up 6 points.

A national referendum bill, which stipulates procedures for constitutional revision, is expected to get through the Diet shortly, and constitutional revision has now become more likely. However, the general public appears to have become somewhat cautious.

The survey was taken by Nikkei Research Inc. on April 27-29 over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,559 households with one or more voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 865 persons (55.5% ).

TOKYO 00002102 002 OF 007

(2) DPJ's Ozawa's strategy again suffers a setback with failure to decide a joint candidate in talks with SDP for Upper House representation in Oita Prefecture

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
May 10, 2007

Muryu Yamada, Daihaku Kasai

The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) yesterday gave up on the plan to field a unified candidate with the minor opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the Oita constituency for Upper House representation. With both parties' prefectural chapters insisting on fielding their respective candidates, the Minshuto leadership concluded that there would be no election cooperation in the Oita constituency. Minshuto and the SDP intend to field a joint candidate in the Akita and Toyama constituencies. In the Okinawa constituency, opposition parties are expected to back a joint candidate, but the failure in election cooperation in the Oita constituency has come as a setback to Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa, who is in pursuit of cooperation among the opposition parties, following his party's defeat in the Upper House by-election in Okinawa last month.

Failure in fielding a joint candidate in Oita may affect other constituencies

"I failed to pick a joint candidate," Ozawa said yesterday at a press briefing in party headquarters and revealed his chagrin. Coordination began last year behind the scenes to field a joint candidate in the Oita constituency but the efforts for coordination ran into trouble later. Oita Prefecture was the home prefecture of former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama (former head of the SDP), and perhaps for that reason, the region is the SDP's strong electoral turf. In this past February, the SDP's Oita chapter decided to support a medical doctor, Bunroku Matsumoto (64). Meanwhile, Minshuto's chapter announced it would support Taiwa Yano (50), a former official working for the Saeki city government in Oita Prefecture to counter the SDP's move. SDP President Mizuho Fukushima already implied the possibility of reviewing overall election cooperation with Minshuto.

Meeting the press, Ozawa emphasized that the party leadership would neither adopt Yano as an authorized candidate nor recommend him. Ozawa explained, "We won't bind the prefectural chapter whoever it backs," in effect hinting that he would accept the failure of coordination on election cooperation in Oita. Yesterday noon, Ozawa telephoned SDP Secretary-General Seiji Mataichi and told him: "Our party will not have our own candidate. You may feel dissatisfied, but I hope you will understand this."

In the coordination process for fielding a joint candidate in Oita, Ozawa himself took pains to engage in the process, out of concern that his "strategy" aimed at reversing the positions of the ruling and opposition parties by taking advantage of the upcoming Upper House election would otherwise collapse if he failed to continue election cooperation among opposition parties. But Minshuto's Oita chapter refused to entrust coordination to Ozawa. On April 25, Matsumoto and Yano were both called to Tokyo, and both were persuaded by Ozawa and Mataichi in their last-ditch effort, but their effort failed.

In Minshuto, a move is growing to seek to pursue the party's

TOKYO 00002102 003 OF 007

identity instead of election cooperation in part because the joint candidate backed by opposition parties was defeated in the recent Upper House by-election in Okinawa. Yesterday, Mataichi told reporters, "I think this failure must not affect (election cooperation in other constituencies), but the question lies with how each constituency will take the failure," implying the possibility that the failure will have an adverse effect on a united front among opposition parties, possibly widening the rift among opposition parties over election cooperation.

(3) Upper House election in 2007: Postwar generation of LDP lawmakers split over whether Abe should take reform line or conservative policy

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Slightly abridged)  
May 10, 2007

The postwar generation of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members have begun to move in an effort to make the Abe administration a full-scale administration.

Lower House member Nobuhiro Oumiya suggested to LDP Federation of Diet Members for Acceleration of Reform Chairman Yasufumi Tanahashi, former science and technology minister, on the afternoon of May 8: "Why don't we discuss what we should do to become lawmakers who are respected by the people?" Tanahashi replied: "Let's discuss the issue, including future options for the House of Councillors, prior to the Upper House election."

By activating debates on reforms among mid-ranking and junior lawmakers, Tanahashi aims to underscore the image of Prime Minister Abe eagerly tackling reforms.

Tanahashi has been elected to the House of Representatives four times. Encouraged by freshman lawmakers, including Oumiya, he assumed the chairmanship of the reform panel last December. About 100 middle-ranking or junior lawmakers are members, and former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has joined it as an advisor.

When the panel was established, the support rating for the Abe administration kept going down due to its decision to reinstate so-called postal rebels in the party. Freshman lawmakers known as "Koizumi children" were worried about the outcome of the Upper House election, one member saying: "If the situation is left unattended, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) will surely defeat the LDP."

Tanahashi highly evaluates Abe's efforts on party reform when he was acting secretary general and secretary general. The Tsushima faction, to which Tanahashi belongs, is also the home for Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga, who has prime ministerial ambitions, as well. Tanahashi thinks that the faction should now support Abe and not move for the sake of factional interests. He has

said to party members: "Middle-ranking and junior members serve as the engine for reforms. If we advocate reforms, Mr. Abe will surely respond.

On the Abe-proposed idea of setting up a new human resource agency for public servants, an issue that split the LDP, Tanahashi made efforts to build up support for the idea.

Tanahashi said: "In order to move reform plans forward, a long-term administration is necessary. It is absolutely necessary for the ruling coalition to maintain its majority in the Upper House

TOKYO 00002102 004 OF 007

election and make the Abe administration a long-lasting one."

Tanahashi belongs to the successor generation to Abe. He seems to be motivated to wait for his turn to come, while pushing ahead with generational change under Prime Minister Abe.

Abe installed Yoshihide Suga and other members in the Federation of Diet Members for the Second Chance Program, which worked to boost support for Abe in the LDP presidential election last September, to key ministerial posts. A certain cabinet minister grumbled: "The Tanahashi-led panel might be aiming at ministerial posts in a personnel reshuffle to be carried out after the Upper House election."

On the other hand, Lower House member Keiji Furuya of the LDP will soon launch a parliamentary group to promote a values-oriented diplomacy, with the aim of supporting the assertive diplomacy as advocated by Abe. About 20 conservatives, including Lower House members Kyoko Nishikawa and Kenichi Mizuno, plan to join the Furuya-headed new group. Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa, a friend of Abe, will become an advisor.

Furuya is one of the postal rebels who were reinstated in the party last December. He has served as six terms in the Lower House, and he was ahead of Abe at Seikei University. Both have worked together in dealing with the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents.

Furuya is concerned that Abe has tried to contain his conservative favor since assuming the prime minister's post. A mid-ranking official of the Ibuki faction also said: "Mr. Abe has been quite a different person since he came into office. On the Yasukuni Shrine issue and policy toward China, I am not fully satisfied with his responses." The members of the Furuya-led parliamentary group are determined to speak for Abe. Tanahashi and former Posts and Communications Minister Seiko Noda, both of whom come from Gifu, his electoral district, once served as cabinet minister, though their numbers of elections are fewer than his. Bearing this in mind, Furuya also seems to be aiming at entering the cabinet by making efforts to give the administration a boost.

Will Abe take over Koizumi reforms as his successor or assume the role of flag-bearer for conservatism? Middle-ranking and junior LDP members expect Abe to take a different policy line. Attention is being focused on which course he would take in the reshuffle after the Upper House election.

(4) Upper House election: Support organizations undergoing change; DPJ seeking support from agricultural cooperatives, religious circles; LDP approaching coops

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
May 10, 2007

Ichiro Ozawa, head of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), made his appeal to the audience at the first meeting of the campaign headquarters held at the party headquarters yesterday: "There are only two months and a half left until the Upper House election. We must do our best just as we did when the election was officially announced." The DPJ is ready to stake its fate on 29 single-seat constituencies, which are now part of the stronghold of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The proportion of farm households is high in those districts.

Makes big leap-forward advance in isolate islands

DPJ Headquarters in late April received a letter of protest noting: "Agricultural cooperatives are in a chaotic state. This could affect future campaigns."

The sender was the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (JA). The complaint was about the questionnaires the LDP Agricultural Cooperatives Reform Headquarters headed by Masahiko Yamada) sent in early April to agricultural cooperatives bypassing JA. The questionnaires asked questions upsetting JA, including the propriety of disclosing information on the use of subsidies granted to agricultural cooperatives and their political neutrality.

There are about 9 million JA members throughout the nation. Ozawa during the meeting yesterday harshly criticized JA, noting, "JA has become overgrown, producing a harmful effect. I want it to return to the starting point and have the party render services to farmers."

There are signs of changes taking place. In the Nagasaki Prefectural Assembly members' election, the DPJ made a good show in a constituency to which Yamada belongs, especially in areas including isolated islands. Yamada analyzed the result: "Our party's agricultural policy, such as an income compensation system for each farm household, has filtered down among farmers." He will shortly establish an agricultural policy forum bringing together former JA officials from all over the country.

Shinshuren to recommend DPJ candidate for first time in 18 years

Yoshito Sengoku, who called for the establishment of the DPJ Buddhist Lawmakers' League (BLL), chaired by Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, made a speech at its inauguration ceremony, "It is a major event for Japanese political circles that religious circles and the DPJ have established a relationship like this." The secretary general of the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) was seen standing by him. The JBF is joined by 102 religious sects and groups, including the Soto sect and the Jodo shin sect, which account for approximately 90% of temples throughout the nation. The DPJ for the first time recommended a priest belonging to the Honganji-ha of the Jodo shin sect, which is said to have many DPJ supporters. The JBF will likely support the DPJ in the upcoming Upper House election. One senior BLL official has analyzed, "Dissatisfaction with the LDP-New Komeito administration is mounting in religious circles due to its proposal to amend to the Constitution and the Yasukuni shrine issue."

The New Federation of Japanese Religious Organizations (Shinshuren) with membership of 69 religious groups will recommend a DPJ candidate in the Upper House election. This is the first time for it to do so since the one in 1989.

LDP pins hopes on secret party members

The LDP is also doing its utmost. A meeting with the Pal System Federation was held at LDP Headquarters on Apr. 18. The Pal System is a home delivery service of food operated by the Cooperative Association. One senior LDP official said, "Coops have the image of being close to the DPJ or the Japanese Communist Party. However, LDP supporters also shop at coops." The membership of the Coop Association in seven prefectures and Tokyo totals 1 million. Kazuaki Miyaji, head of LDP Party Organizational Headquarters, is trying to

lure senior coop officials, saying, "We hope we can hold talks with each block of coops throughout the nation."

Postal organizations, which appear to have given up on the LDP, are showing moves to swing back to it. About 30% of special postmasters are said to be hereditary postmasters who privately own post office buildings. Some special postmasters who do not want to be

transferred to other areas have begun to appeal to the LDP for help. A source related to postal policy said, "There should be quite a number of special postmasters who are LDP members."

(5) Former Prime Minister Koizumi may resume diplomatic activities

SENTAKU (Page 44) (Full)  
May 2007

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reportedly will return to the center of the diplomatic stage after the House of Councillors election in July. He has shied away from the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, saying, "Prime Minister Abe should carry out his own diplomacy as he likes." Abe has placed priority on diplomacy toward China, South Korea, and the United States. Koizumi, therefore, appears to want to complement Abe's foreign policy by carrying out diplomacy toward the Middle East, which Japan has put aside, and toward the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where he achieved results.

Koizumi reportedly has said that he would like to be made an "envoy" to lay the groundwork for Abe's diplomacy at the ASEAN summit to be held later this year. He also wants to exchange views with the leaders of ASEAN and Middle East, as well as economic officials. One of Abe's brain-trust advisors said, "I wish he would not meddle in our business."

(6) Rumor that Vice Foreign Minister Yachi is most likely candidate to serve as chief of the secretariat of Japanese version of NSC

SENTAKU (Page 45) (Full)  
May 2007

Under the auspices of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government aims to create a Japanese version of National Security Council (NSC) next April. The rumor is that Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shoichi Yachi is the most likely candidate for chief of the secretariat of the planned NSC. The reason for the rumor is that

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"Yachi, as Abe's brain-trust advisor on foreign policy, is most trusted in the government office district of Kasumigaseki," said a source familiar with the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei). Another reason is that at the prime minister's direction Yachi's retirement was extended for a year until next March.

The secretariat, which would become the think tank of the NSC, will be composed of 10 to 20 government staff and political appointees from the private sector. It is responsible for analyzing economic and energy issues by policy and foreign policy with China and North by region so that it will come up with Japan's mid- and long-term national strategy. All the more because the secretariat of NSC will have great influence in order to set the direction of Japan's national strategy, the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry and the National Police Agency are reportedly having a close contest behind closed doors in order to secure the post of chief of the secretariat.

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TOKYO 00002102 007 OF 007

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